

## *Stories of the Saints – Digging Deeper*

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### Cain, Abel, and Seth

#### Introduction

While the story of Adam and Eve is one that often read, the full stories of their sons Cain, Abel, and Seth are quite often reduced to simply “Cain was a bad man who killed Abel, a good man”.

There is much happening in these stories as well, though. Most significant are the concepts of faith and sacrifice. We see the importance of faith in action toward God, and the tragic results of acting without faith. And we see the beginning of the story of sacrifice and acts of worship.

#### Faith: Receiving What God Gives

Martin Luther called justification by grace through faith the “point on which the church stands or falls”. It’s that important. Justification means “being declared right with God”. Christians are in this state of a right standing before God only by His grace. And it is through faith in the person and work of Jesus as Lord and Christ that a person receives this grace.

We need to spend some time unpacking this concept of faith, since it is one of the central concepts of Christianity.

#### Faith:

- Is how we receive the gifts of God (most importantly, the gift of salvation), and itself is a gift of God – it is not something people do; it is not a “work” (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Is directed to an object. It is not an end in itself, but faith in someone or something. A Christian’s faith is in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (Acts 20:17-21).
- Is how a person is considered righteous before God (Romans 4:3, 22-25).
- Is not “blind”, unreasonable, or based on feelings. It is based on fact (I Corinthians 15).

- Always leads to “good works” – doing good for others in response to what God has given (Ephesians 2:10). These works are a necessary evidence of a Christian’s faith (James 2:14-18). They don’t lead to a saving faith; they are a result of it. Often referred to as “sanctification”, it is God working *through* us.
- Is the only way that a person can please God (Hebrews 11:5-6).

#### Digging Deeper: Things you probably didn’t learn in Sunday School, and things to talk about with those around you.

- When Cain was born, it is probable that Eve thought that he was the “offspring” that God talked about (Genesis 3:15, 4:1). We read the story with the whole picture in mind, but why wouldn’t have Eve thought that Cain would be the promised one?
- The main difference between Cain and Abel was not that Cain was bad and Abel was good, but that Abel acted in faith while Cain did not (Hebrews 11:4). This is an incredibly important point. Though “good” and “bad” are entirely logical human categories, they are just that: human categories. God has no categories like this. His categories are “faith” and “no faith”.
- God’s Word to Cain was that sin was “crouching at [his] door”, but he must master it. Have you ever felt like sin was crouching at your door, and it was a struggle to master it? Maybe you are feeling like that right now. The answer to this is not to simply try harder, but to confess sin and believe the Good News of forgiveness in Jesus (James 5:13-16). It may be a difficult thing, but you are encouraged to share your struggles with a close friend, family member, spiritual mentor, Pastor – someone who will share the Gospel with you and encourage you in Jesus.
- The biggest difference between a life lived strong in faith and one without faith is that a faith-fueled life is a “get to” life (I get to worship, I get to serve, I get to give). A life not fueled by faith is a “have to” life (I have to worship, I have to serve, I have to give). What are some practical implications of this for you?